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Next 4 Page(s) In Document Exempt

Approved For Release 2005/08/02 : CIA-RDP81B00080R001400190012-4

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RHODESIA - Current Views

1. Although an Interagency Intelligence Memorandum on the Zimbabwe Rhodesia problem is scheduled for publication about mid-June, Intelligence Community representatives have concluded that an earlier report of current analytical views, presented in the form of a set of judgments without extensive supporting argument, would be useful. This paper is that report. It has been coordinated at the working level to ensure that it does reflect analysts' views, but has not been subjected to the scrutiny normally given an IIM.

2. The recent elections in Rhodesia have produced the basis for a black parliamentary majority under the constitution approved by the white electorate last winter. These elections do not resolve questions pertaining to the ability of the new government (which we expect to have been established by early June) over the next several months to:

-- consolidate its position internally;

-- gain international support and recognition;

-- make progress in winding down the war against the guerrillas;

-- restore the deteriorating economy.

In tackling these questions, we also have addressed the role of the guerrillas, actions of the major external actors, and the likely consequences of the Western maintenance or dropping of sanctions.

3. For the next few months the attitudes of whites toward the new regime in Salisbury will be a more critical factor than those of blacks. We believe that the whites will at least tend to suspend judgment during the next few months, will not exit en masse, and that they will continue to fight for the government as long as they perceive it to serve their basic interests. The essential character of the Zimbabwe Rhodesian government as an administration will not change much in the next few months; it will continue to be run day-to-day by whites. 25X1

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4. The initial posture of the new black leaders toward the whites will be more one of accommodation than confrontation, although ultimately, unless Muzorewa turns out to be a total puppet, there will likely be serious friction between him and his party and the white leaders. The black leadership's attitude toward rival internal black leaders is likely to be cavalier; this could be modified in action by white advice.

5. The immediate priorities of the new regime will be on international recognition, internal security -- including measures to bring the black auxiliaries under tighter direction -- and on efforts by a variety of means to begin to end the war. These emphases imply postponement of serious efforts to meet other expectations of the black community. The very existence of a black-led government will give rise to expectations of more civil service and white collar jobs for educated blacks; skilled blacks will expect to enter trades; many will assume that more and better land will be made available to them; others will anticipate broadening educational opportunities. For the time being, whites will seek to channel pressure to enlarge black roles in ways that do not further threaten basic white privileges.

6. A black-led government will make a major effort to entice defectors from the guerrilla movements, and independent developments within the guerrilla movements themselves -- e.g., graver splits in ZAPU and ZANU -- could play a significant role. We do not believe, however, that defections will be on a scale to turn the tide of military action.

7. With regard to external relations, the formation of a black-led government places Rhodesia's critics and opponents on the defensive. This is not likely to translate into immediate gains for Zimbabwe Rhodesia either through widespread recognition or formal lifting of sanctions, but more of the burden of "why not?" will be placed on Salisbury's opponents in the West and on those African states, like Nigeria, which have backed the Frontline and the Patriotic Front on black nationalist grounds. Such African governments, and of course the Marxist-minded regimes like Ethiopia's, will continue to support the guerrillas. A Tory government in the UK almost certainly would prepare the way for not renewing sanctions in November, but we do not now expect it to act before then.

8. The South Africans, now as previously the key element in the Zimbabwe Rhodesian equation, will provide economic and military support to keep the black-led regime going for this period. Given this support and international trends they perceive as favorable, we see virtually no prospect that the Salisbury leaders within the next few months will entertain seriously proposals that seem to undermine white interests or Muzorewa's hold on the leadership, including a re-run of elections under UN supervision.

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9. Most analysts believe that available evidence does not suggest a significant shift in Soviet or Cuban policy during this period. In the view of others, the Soviets and Cubans appear to be reassessing their policies towards Rhodesia in the face of the new developments in Salisbury. All agree, however, that Frontline resistance to outside initiatives which could result in great power confrontation in the region will remain a critical obstacle to a greater Soviet-Cuban role. If, during this period, Rhodesian air attacks against targets in Zambia and Mozambique continue to intensify, there is a fair chance that these governments would request air defense or other specialists to help defend the installations. Moscow and/or Havana would probably respond positively.

10. The military situation nonetheless will continue to develop in a way that increases the opportunities and pressures for outside intervention, particularly on the guerrilla side. While the new Zimbabwe Rhodesia government is likely to pursue "carrot-and'stick" tactics against both the guerrillas and the Frontline States and is unlikely to cut off Zambia entirely from the southern supply routes, it very likely will intensify military operations across the board and expand the range of geographic targets in Zambia and Mozambique as well as in Angola and possibly even Tanzania. We think the Rhodesians will still avoid foreign national military or economic targets when they can and will be influenced to some degree by the desire to encourage international diplomatic support.

11. The new government's internal military operations will probably feature increased use of auxiliaries in rural areas, and a more systematic effort to deny food to guerrilla bands during the impending maize shortage. These tactics are not likely in the next few months to restore any significant measure of government control in rural areas where it has crumbled, but they should serve to maintain the present level of control for at least the next several months, and this should in turn permit the government to put a reasonably good face on its security situation generally. The critical short-term factor in the military field, as in others, is white morale; we do not expect a collapse during this period.

12. On the guerrilla side, both ZAPU and ZANU are developing their capabilities only slowly, despite numerous training programs and a steady flow of materiel from external sources. A credible air defense still seems beyond the Frontline's or guerrillas' reach in this period without direct outside support; when they make significant progress in this field, they will have added a significant new element to the military balance. The guerrillas inside Rhodesia may be able to increase their numbers to some extent in this period as more trained manpower becomes available. While

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this obviously will add to the strain on Salisbury's defensive capabilities, it is not likely to shift the military balance.

13. Economic factors are not likely to have a critical, or even a major, effect on either the political or military situations during the next few months, given the South African policy of support for the new regime. Although we are unable to quantify them, the economic benefits -- not to mention the psychological boost -- from lifting sanctions would probably be substantial, although some would take time to take hold. The Rhodesians would be able to take better advantage of the current pick-up in world demand for base metals, and would save the substantial sanction-busting fees Rhodesians have been paying to middlemen.

14. But even without sanctions lifted, and in the face of a depressed economic situation, Salisbury's ability to carry on the war and provide essential services is not likely to be seriously impeded during the next few months. At worst, a continuation of the present situation would require some belt tightening, and ultimately white emigration could increase substantially with the depressing economic effects accentuated. Longer term, this could be a serious problem, but the time for these factors to play a really direct role is not yet.

15. We conclude, therefore, that

-- the new government will hold its own internally in the next few months;

-- it will not gain widespread international support or recognition during this period;

-- it will make little progress in winding down the war from its own initiatives, but may well be assisted by splits and confusions in the guerrilla movement;

-- it would benefit psychologically from a lifting of sanctions, but the economic benefits, although substantial in a longer run, would not immediately restore the economy. Continuation of sanctions would not be crippling, however.

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